Play occupied a significant place in the publishing industry of early modern Japan, across books and ephemera. Boardgames, riddles, rebuses, brainteasers, magic tricks and much more inhabited a wealth of printed matter. Fictional prose joined in, by appropriating and re-envisioning such materials. How were books occupied by play meant to be perused? What happens when materials designed primarily for play are recast in narrative prose? How do we make sense of texts that are replete with what we might readily dismiss as unnecessary, cognitive obstacles? This talk interrogates these questions among others by engaging with a wealth of early modern materials that invite what Professor Moretti tentatively call playful reading. In the process, I investigate texts that are designed as play spaces and I explore how their potential is fully unleashed by readers who are eager to become comrades in play. Altogether this paper reflects broadly on how early modern Japanese prose confronts us with texts that complicate our understanding of the act of reading.